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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7939th meeting
Monday, 15 May 2017, 7.05 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Clay
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (S/2017/293)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2017/312)

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The meeting was called to order at 7.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (S/2017/293)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*). In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Sudan and South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/412, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/293, which contains the special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, as well as to document S/2017/312, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2352 (2017).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): We welcome the Security Council's decision today to extend for another six months the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). That was the right decision. UNISFA provides critical security to the Abyei Area and helps communities that live and travel through Abyei to prevent and mitigate violence. We are grateful to Ethiopia for the very significant role it plays in maintaining peace and security in Abyei.

The United States fully concurs with the Secretary-General's assessment that the conflict over Abyei is a political problem that requires a political solution. As we all discussed here in the Chamber during the April briefing on peacekeeping (see S/PV.7926), when the security Council considers whether a peacekeeping operation is the right tool for us to use in the maintenance of peace and security, we must consider whether the mission supports a political solution.

In reviewing the mandate of UNISFA, the United States carefully considered whether the mission was appropriately aligned with the will of the parties and the current security situation in Abyei. Regrettably, since 2011 the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have consistently lacked commitment to engage in the work necessary to resolve Abyei's final status and to establish the interim measures previously agreed to by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to jointly administer and police the Abyei Area. In addition, the Sudan and South Sudan continue to place restrictions on UNISFA, thereby inhibiting its ability to carry out the very mandate both States requested.

When we took the decision to authorize UNISFA, and when we subsequently added tasks in support of the joint border monitoring mission, there was a clear commitment from both the Sudan and South Sudan to carry out certain steps and a request for the United Nations to support their efforts. While UNISFA has done its part, the Sudan and South Sudan have not taken the necessary steps to fully operationalize the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). We continue to support the JBVMM concept, but five years of obstacles to the deployment of the mission is enough. Until the parties remove the obstacles and take the steps towards making the Mechanism effective, UNISFA will not be able to fully carry out its mandate.

That speaks to a broader point applicable to all peacekeeping missions: the Security Council should not indefinitely support mandates that lack the strategic consent of the parties. When we are faced with those challenges, we must use the leverage we have to ensure our peacekeeping operations are effective. That includes demanding that States that are benefiting from our missions comply with their agreements with the United Nations and with each other. If they do not, then it is our job to take action.

We therefore welcome the Council's decision that this will be the last extension of UNISFA's mandate to support the Border Monitoring Mechanism unless the parties can clearly demonstrate through their actions, including through the steps outlined in today's resolution, that they are achieving the full functioning of the Mechanism. It is incumbent upon all of us as Council members to question the status quo when we have recognized that the status quo is not working.

The United States has committed to helping to support security and stability in Abyei, the Sudan, South Sudan and the region. We urge a reinvigorated political process leading to a permanent solution for the status of Abyei. We also call on the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to honour their commitments to support UNISFA's full deployment and to remove all obstacles to its operation.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2352 (2017), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for another six months. As the only troop-contributing country to this unique mission, it should come as no surprise that we attach a lot of importance to UNISFA. That is why we actively and constructively engaged in the negotiations of the resolution. We worked with the penholder and other members on this important file even before joining the Security Council. We know that there has always been unanimous support for this mission since its inception. No doubt, the negotiations on the resolution were not easy. In the end, however, it is good that all of us were able to maintain Council unity on this important matter. Let me take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to the penholder and to all the members of the Council for demonstrating the necessary flexibility and compromise in a bid to achieve consensus.

With regard to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), which was the most important sticking point in the negotiations, all of us know the reason for the lack of meaningful progress; there is no point in dwelling on it here. The most important issue is that both parties should demonstrate full commitment to the implementation of their arrangements and take the necessary steps to that effect, as called for in the resolution just adopted. On that, the penholder has a very strong point.

In that regard, we welcome the outcome of the extraordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism held in Addis Ababa yesterday under the auspices of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, which underscored the need for both parties to urgently take practical steps to activate the JBVMM and facilitate its work. The meeting also outlined a clear road map on steps that need to be taken over the coming weeks and months. That is indeed the essence of what we discussed over the past couple of days. We sincerely hope that things will move in the right direction so that there can be tangible progress by the time we meet again, in six months, to consider this file.

It is also imperative that the parties urgently begin to establish the Abyei Area administration and constitute the Abyei police, in accordance with the commitments under the 20 June 2011 agreement, without which UNISFA will be forced to continue to operate in a governance vacuum, which creates difficulties for the mission in carrying out its mandate and shouldering additional burdens in undertaking civilian responsibilities. Therefore, the parties should also endeavour to unlock some of the issues hindering the establishment of a civilian administration and police services, with a view to making progress towards the full implementation of the 2011 agreement.

In the absence of any progress, the continued presence of the mission, which is so critical for peace and stability in the Abyei Area, will be in serious jeopardy. The strong message to emerge today from the Council on this issue is indeed very good. We trust that both parties heed the call.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I speak also on behalf of Sweden.

This unanimous vote is a strong sign of Security Council unity. We are grateful to the United States, in the role of penholder, for the constructive position that allowed us to reach an important result. We also thank Ethiopia for its flexibility and its role in the mission in Abyei.

We share the points raised by United States on the need for greater effectiveness in United Nations peace missions. Renewing the mandate of a peacekeeping mission should never be considered a routine activity or business as usual. Instead, it always requires an in-depth analysis by the Council. That is why, together with Sweden, which I would like to commend for its cooperation, and in close consultation with the 10 elected members, we asked on Friday to continue our discussions. We thank you, Mr. President, for having accepted that request, which led to a fruitful discussion that made it possible for us to bridge positions and paved the way for consensus in the interest of Council unity, which we consider to be of paramount importance. In that spirit, we worked towards a balanced solution that brings together the need for more efficient peacekeeping while contributing to preventing further instability across East Africa.

The review of a peacekeeping mission should take into account the views of the regional actors and of the troop-contributing countries, in particular when such views are convergent and adhere to the Secretary-General's strategic reviews, as is the case with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Today's resolution 2352 (2017) does just that.

Nevertheless, we agree that the stalemate in Abyei has gone on for too long. Today the Council is saying to the parties that they must demonstrate clear commitment in the next six months or UNISFA's support for the joint border verification mission will come to an end. In that regard, we welcome the recent meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, held in Addis Ababa. The parties must now promptly take concrete progress on the implantation of the border arrangements.

The outcome of today's vote can provide a successful model for discussion in the coming months on other peacekeeping operations. Italy and Sweden will continue to work with all members of the Council for sustainable and inclusive solutions.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation supported the adoption of compromise resolution 2352 (2017), on extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) . It is our view that, even if working at limited functionality, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism remains of great importance for the entire process for inter-Sudanese solutions. Fully halting UNISFA's support for the Mechanism seems illogical and destructive, not just in Abyei but in the entire region. It is our hope that both the Sudan and South Sudan will heed the clear signal from the security Council regarding the need to activate the mechanisms established by the agreements on Abyei so as to make progress in the process of the political settlement.

We are pleased that, at the end the day, common sense prevailed and a resolution was adopted that reflects the views of leaders of the region, and is not limited just to narrow financial concerns. While indeed significant questions remain regarding the working methods of the penholders, who to the very last minute procrastinated in finding a compromise, we would nonetheless like to express our support for the activities of UNISFA and welcome the efforts of Ethiopia's as the troop-contributing country that bears the primary burden for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2352 (2017). We thank the United States for its strong determination to lead the negotiations and for its engagement throughout the process. We would also like to highly commend the flexibility of Ethiopia in supporting the resolution.

Japan voted in favour of the resolution based on the need to maintain the relative calm in Abyei and improve the functioning of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The role of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei has been crucial in the absence of the Abyei Area administration council and police service. We thank Ethiopia for its efforts in that regard.

Japan is encouraged that grassroots dialogue between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya continues and that the Amiet common market is benefiting both tribes. However, we are disappointed by the lack of political progress to bolster those developments.

The Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and a Joint Political and Security Mechanism are very important to build confidence on pending issues such as the final status of Abyei as well as the demarcation and demilitarization of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone.

Japan, as a matter of principle, supports streamlining United Nations peacekeeping missions through improved efficiency. We believe that, on each peacekeeping operation, the Council should hold

in-depth discussions and make judgments on mandates or ceilings we authorize, based on their individual merits. We welcome the fact that the Council was able to decide unanimously to make a final extension of its support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, unless clear conditions are met.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to thank the delegation of the United States for its constructive efforts to ensure the adoption of resolution 2352 (2017), unanimously extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei. The resolution to extend the mandate unanimously reflects the unity of the Council and sends a clear and strong message to the parties to the conflict that the Council has a clear vision that it wants to implement and that the two parties should comply with that vision.

My country voted in favour of the resolution in order to ensure a correlation between the strength of the Force on the ground and its mandate. This approach should be followed when reviewing any peacekeeping operation, instead of seeking a gradual decrease in strength that would affect the ability of the operation to carry out its mandate.

In closing, we note the need to take into consideration the concerns of all troop-contributing countries (TCCs) when determining, extending or altering the mandates of current peacekeeping operations. TCCs are an important part of these operations and responsible for implementing the mandates of operations. They are the parties most capable of determining the needs of every peacekeeping operation and of their own forces.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2352 (2017), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The resolution embodies the will of the Council, while taking into account the concerns of the affected countries and the troop-contributing countries, including Ethiopia.

Thanks to the joint efforts made by the Sudan and South Sudan, alongside the international community, the situation in Abyei remains calm in general, but challenges remain to its political and security situation. UNISFA's ongoing active implementation of its mandate will be conducive to the maintenance of regional peace and stability.

China hopes that the resolution will be earnestly and effectively implemented. We encourage the Sudan and South Sudan to continue to engage in dialogue; steadily build trust and confidence, keeping in mind the larger picture of the interests of all ethnicities and communities in the region; effectively advance the implementation of the relevant bilateral agreements; and establish and operationalize interim adminstrative and judicial institutions at an early date.

China will continue to support UNISFA in implementing its mandate, and stands ready to play a constructive role in achieving peace and stability at an early date in the Abyei area.

Mr. Clay (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of resolution 2352 (2017) today. Through this text, we have extended the important work of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for another six months.

I should like to pay tribute to the mission and to Ethiopia for all they have done to improve the security and humanitarian situation in Abyei, despite the absence of political progress. Our collective priority now must be supporting continued stability in the region and the reinvigoration of the political process. UNISFA will play an important role in that effort. But as it does, it is right that we keep it under close review so that it is best suited to fulfil its mandate.

Where there is evidence that part of a mission is not contributing to the implementation of a mandate, we should not continue to devote resources to it, particularly when budgets across all missions are under pressure. For the past five years, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism has been unable to monitor the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone effectively because the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have not matched the commitment of UNISFA. The resolution makes it clear that support to the Monitoring Mechanism will stop in six months unless both Governments show steadfast commitment to allowing the Mechanism to reach full operational capability.

Therefore, let me close by urging the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to fully engage with the African Union and the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, including by implementing the commitments they made over the weekend, so that governance and justice mechanisms can be established, direct negotiations resumed and a final, overdue settlements of the Abyei question can at last be agreed.

Mr. Barro (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal welcomes the adoption of resolution 2352 (2017), extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We thank the members of the Security Council, in particular the penholding delegation and the troop-contributing countries, for their flexibility, which made it possible to achieve this dynamic compromise.

Senegal decided to join in the renewal of the UNISFA mandate, including its operational support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, because we are deeply convinced of the need for a united approach of the Security Council to managing relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, underpinned by our determination to work side by side with the two countries in the search for lasting stability and peace. To that end, in implementing the relevant agreements between the two countries, we appeal to the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to establish provisional arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei area and agreements on border security, in particular the Agreement on the Border Monitoring Support Mission.

In the context, we need all possible guarantees in order to prevent tensions that could compromise the stability that has been achieved. The scope of the challenge requires the Security Council to remain continuously vigilant and united, and to cooperate fully with the organizations and countries of the region, which have a very important role to play. In that regard, my delegation is convinced that we must engage in and maintain a dynamic and constructive dialogue with the troop-contributing countries.

Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2352 (2017), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for six months. It is indeed crucial to continue to closely follow the situation between the Sudan and South Sudan and to align the mission with its mandate.

Stable relations between the Sudan and South Sudan are a major determinant for peace and security in West Africa. France welcomes the activities of Ethiopia, which, through its soldiers deployed to UNISFA, is contributing to that goal with resolve and dedication. Stable relations between the Sudan and South Sudan are first and foremost in the hands of the two parties. The agreements signed by the two parties in 2011 and 2012 are the road map to be followed to ensure that stability, which requires a change in the status quo.

We therefore welcome the resolution's call on the parties to live up to their responsibilities in this framework and to make the necessary progress in managing their relations. In this connection, we recall our support for the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, headed by President Mbeki, in its ongoing and stepped-up efforts for the implementation of the agreements between the two parties. The meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in Addis Ababa over the past few days is a welcome development, and we hope that the commitments undertaken will be fully implemented.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as a representative of Uruguay.

Frankly, I trust that if any clear element should emerge from Uruguay's membership of the Security Council, it is our firm conviction that no State — much less a State participating in a peacekeeping mission — can hinder missions established by the Security Council. I think we have fought quite hard on that theme.

The adoption of resolution 2352 (2017), which we welcome, is conditional. This will be the last extension of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei unless both parties demonstrate in deed a clear and firm commitment to and offer firm guarantees for the implementation of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. At the same time, we will await the report to be issued by the Secretary-General before 15 October in order to see whether the Mechanism has reached full operational capacity. The issue of the full operational capacity of peacekeeping missions has also been an ongoing concern of my delegation.

We commend Ethiopia for its efforts in Abyei over the years. It has undoubtedly done important work in protecting the civilian population. We thank the United States for the transparent and open way in which it conducted the negotiations on the resolution, allowing it to be adopted unanimously. Let me clearly reaffirm that the future of this peacekeeping mission is now exclusively in the hands of the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan.

I shall now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Elnour (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. I wish you every success. I am sure that we will cooperate fully with you in this endeavour.

I would like to thank the Council for the spirit of cooperation and consensus that allowed it today to adopt resolution 2352 (2017), extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for six months. We hope that the same spirit will characterize the discussions of the Council in a manner that will allow it to confront all challenges to international peace and security.

My country is committed to implementing the resolution adopted today and any subsequent relevant resolutions. I take this opportunity to stress my country's commitment to cooperating with UNISFA in order to allow it to implement its mandate under the resolutions of the Council.

I note the security and stability prevailing in Abyei and the significant progress achieved towards ensuring peaceful coexistence between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. This is a fact noted in all the reports submitted to the Council and is the direct result of the joint efforts of the Government and society and of the positive role played by UNISFA since its inception.

The Sudan has never contributed to disrupting the work of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVBMM) or restricted its movements. The Council has received the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/312), which notes that the Mechanism cancelled 18 of its air patrols due to delays in receiving authorization from the South Sudanese authorities. This clearly shows that the Sudan, unlike the other party, cooperates fully with the Mechanism.

My country believes that the Mechanism is necessary to ensure peace along the borders between the Sudan and South Sudan and to normalize relations between the two countries. Therefore, we cannot understand why UNISFA would end its support for the Mechanism. If we are to activate the Mechanism, we need to launch dialogue and discussion with the Government of South Sudan, pressure it to honour its commitments in order to operationalize the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, and remove any obstacles to the work of the JBVMM.

The Government of my country is fully committed to implementing the decisions the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, which met today and yesterday in Addis Ababa. We are also committed to implementing any decision resulting from future meetings, especially those relating to the activation of the JBVMM, the creation of additional team sites and the implementation of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area. My country hopes that the decisions of these meetings will constitute a new start towards normalizing relations between the two countries and addressing any concerns, especially security concerns.

My country is committed to all agreements signed with the Government of South Sudan, including the 2004 Abyei Protocol, the 20 June 2011 temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, and the 27 September 2012 Agreements on Cooperation and Security Arrangements. We call on our brothers in the Government of South Sudan to engage seriously with the Government of the Sudan and with the African Union in establishing the Abyei institutions provided for in the 20 June 2011 Agreement in order to determine the final status of the Area, which is the sole prerogative of the President of the Sudan and the President of South Sudan, according to the agreements signed between the two parties.

Until then, we stress that the Abyei Area is Sudanese territory. The Republic of the Sudan has full sovereignty over that territory according to the provisions of international law and the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague. We enjoy full sovereignty in line with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. That status cannot be altered other than through a referendum between the two countries or mutually agreed upon measures.

My country believes that sustainable peace and security in Abyei and along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan can be achieved only through the two pillars of implementation of the temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area and the implementation of all provisions of the 27 September 2012 Agreements on Cooperation and Security Arrangements.

The 20 June 2011 Agreement provides for the establishment of the Abyei Area administration, the Abyei Joint oversight committee and the Abyei police service, which are important institutions for ensuring the administration of the area so as to provide the necessary services and ensure peaceful existence among all communities. Those institutions would also contribute to generating the necessary conditions to determine the final status of Abyei in a win-win manner that would satisfy the aspirations of all parties.

Moreover, the 20 June 2011 Agreement laid strong foundations for normalizing relations between the countries and ensuring cooperation in all areas. The Agreement covers every important area so as to ensure a normal relationship between the two countries. The Agreement also provides for certain security arrangements, which call for ending any support to insurgent movements and the establishment of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. However, the Government of South Sudan continues to support and harbour insurgent Sudanese movements in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states and the Darfur region despite the substantial cooperation offered by my own Government, which has been praised by all our international and regional partners. My country hopes that the Government of South Sudan will honour its commitments by fully implementing the necessary security arrangements so as to improve relations between the two countries and meet the two countries' aspirations to peace, stability, development and good-neighbourliness.

With regard to the deployment of the police unit to protect the oil facilities in the Diffra oil complex, my country believes that the establishment of such a unit resulted from the failure to establish the Abyei police service and the presence of Sudanese insurgent movements in South Sudan that would attack the oilfield. Such was the case in 2012 when the Heglig oilfield near the Abyei Area was occupied and destroyed.

To conclude, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to all our partners who contribute to facilitating the work of UNISFA, in particular the Government of Ethiopia and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, as well as the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on the Sudan and South Sudan and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Sudan and South Sudan. The Sudan is fully committed to cooperating with UNISFA so that it can smoothly carry out all its tasks pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malok (South Sudan): Permit me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. I would like to assure you of our full cooperation in achieving the success of your presidency.

I would also like to acknowledge the positive role played by your predecessor in leading the Council last month.

We warmly welcome the report (S/2017/312) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei and strongly support the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). As we have repeatedly stated, although it continues to face serious challenges in implementing its mandate, UNISFA is the best thing that has happened to Abyei in its long history of struggle. With regard to UNISFA's presence in the Abyei Area, the report of the Secretary-General shows that, although a great deal remains to be done, notable progress has been made in promoting peace and security in Abyei, thereby fostering reconciliation and cooperation among the communities that converge seasonally in the Area, delivering social services and humanitarian assistance, and initiating programmes dealing with social economic development. That would not have been possible without the creative and determined effort of UNISFA.

Cooperation between the two countries is critical to any constructive and productive effort in Abyei. Indeed, even the progress made by UNISFA could not have been possible without a certain degree of functional cooperation between the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan. However, much more cooperation is needed if the efforts of UNISFA are to continue to bear tangible results that will benefit the two countries and help facilitate continued progress in the countries' relationship.

The Government of the Republic of South Sudan believes that the withdrawal of support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism would negatively impact the implementation of the Agreements on Cooperation and Security Arrangements, by emboldening each side to take a more combative posture along the border. The Security Council is urged

to continue to encourage support of the Mechanism because ceasing the vital support that is much needed for the Area may lead to a proxy conflict along the South Sudan-Sudan border.

We are indeed encouraged by the recent improvement in relations between the two countries. The Government of South Sudan sincerely hopes that that will develop into even greater cooperation in a wide range of areas of mutual concern and interest. In this connection, it is our firm belief that the Abyei Area could contribute significantly to the development of cordial ties between the two countries. This can be done by building on grass-roots intercommunal cooperation, which can extend to the national level in the two countries.

In conclusion, as things now stand it is obvious that the search for a final solution to the Abyei problem has stalled due to the differences between the two Governments, despite the tireless efforts of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, under the leadership of the former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, and the support of the African Union and the United Nations.

The people of Abyei and the neighbouring communities from both the north and the south who migrate to the Area seasonally in search of water and pasture cannot be abandoned to suffer neglect in a vacuum of State responsibility for their security and general welfare. The international community is called upon to step in and fill the vacuum, not only in the immediate interests of the communities concerned, but also in the long-term interests of the two countries. This is urgently needed to stabilize the situation in the Area and create an environment for a more constructive and fruitful dialogue on the future of Abyei.

The meeting rose at 7.50 p.m.